



Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release
August 10, 2006

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BAUCUS ENCOURAGES KOREA TO COMPLETE AUDITS OF U.S. BEEF PLANTS, RESUME IMPORTS QUICKLY

Senator writes President Roh Moo-hyun as September FTA negotiations approach

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Ranking Member on the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, today called on Korean President Roh Moo-hyun to request the quick completion of Korean audits of U.S. beef plants. In a letter to the president, Baucus urged the audits be performed in time to allow the resumption of beef exports before scheduled negotiations on the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement next month. The text of the Senator's letter follows here:

His Excellency Roh Moo-hyun
President, Republic of Korea
Cheong Wa Dae
1 Jongno-gu
Seoul, Republic of Korea

Dear President Roh:

I am writing to request your personal attention in facilitating the resumption of beef exports from the United States to Korea. For a number of weeks, U.S. officials have been exchanging information on specific meat hygiene procedures with their Korean counterparts. At this point, it remains only for Korean auditors to return to the United States to review these procedures in operation in U.S. plants.

I believe it is of utmost importance that these audits be conducted expeditiously, ideally during the week of August 13, as proposed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This timeframe is necessary to allow Korea to complete its review of the U.S. system and allow the resumption of U.S. beef exports prior to the next round of negotiations on the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement (FTA), scheduled for September.

The continued ban on U.S. beef is a serious irritant in our bilateral trade relationship and stands in the way of concluding the FTA, which I believe offers immense potential benefit to both of our countries. U.S. beef is the most wholesome and delicious in the world, and I am justifiably proud of the high-quality beef produced in my own state of Montana. Internationally accepted scientific evidence clearly demonstrates that U.S. beef is safe for consumers. This includes the full range of beef products – boneless, bone-in and from animals of all ages – consistent with the World Animal Health Organization's (OIE) international standards.

I am confident that the audits will provide the final necessary assurances regarding the safety of U.S. beef and efficacy of the U.S. food safety system, and allow the quick resumption of trade. Therefore, I respectfully ask that you work with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to arrange the visit by Korean auditors to the United States as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Max Baucus

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